

The Smarter Balanced Practice Tests provide an early look at sets of assessment questions aligned to the Common Core for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts/literacy (ELA/literacy) and mathematics.

- The Practice Tests are freely available on the Smarter Balanced website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>. These tests can be accessed by students, teachers, parents, and other interested parties throughout this summer and the 2013-14 school year.
- This initial version of the tests is being released as early as possible to accommodate teacher review prior to the conclusion of the school year. The Practice Tests will be augmented over the summer with the addition of the following features:
 - Performance tasks in mathematics (including classroom-based activities);
 - Based on preliminary data from the Pilot Test, and as part of the continuous improvement process, mathematics performance tasks from the Smarter Balanced pilot will be updated before being released publicly in the Practice Tests. Smarter Balanced will implement the improvements listed below for release in the Practice Tests later in the summer, and will incorporate these updates into the mathematics performance tasks that students will see on the Field Test next spring.
 - Reviewing and adjusting the length of tasks with particular attention to ensuring that the expected amount of time for sustained student engagement is developmentally appropriate;
 - Increasing the use of hand-scored items in the performance tasks to more thoroughly assess complex student thinking;
 - Updating stimuli and item response formats to better support student access;
 - Reviewing and adjusting the linguistic and reading demands to minimize construct irrelevant variance associated with language proficiency; and
 - Including a classroom-based activity that precedes each task, orienting students to the general topic of the task, in order to minimize construct irrelevant variance associated with familiarity of contextual information in the tasks.
 - Classroom-based activities for the English language arts/literacy performance tasks in selected grades; and
 - Scoring rubrics in ELA/literacy and mathematics.
- The Practice Tests include an initial set of accessibility features that will be available to all students in the final assessment system, such as highlighting text, zooming in and out, marking items for review, notepad, and scratch paper.
- Several accommodations are available in the Practice Tests for selected grades and subjects:

	English Language Arts/literacy	Mathematics
Text to Speech (items only)	Grades 4, 7, 11	Grades 3, 7, 11
Braille	Grades 4, 7, 11	Grades 3, 7, 11
Customized pop-up Spanish glossary (mathematics only)		Grades 3, 7, 11

- By August 2013, these accommodations will become available for all grades. In addition, the Practice Tests will feature videos of human signers using American Sign Language (for ELA/literacy listening items and mathematics only) for all grades by fall 2013. Additional accessibility and accommodation features are planned for the Field Test in 2014 and operational test in 2015.
- Users also have access to a brief survey to provide feedback on the Practice Test experience.

The Practice Tests are an important tool to support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced assessments.

- Available nearly two years before the first administration of the summative assessment, the Practice Tests can be used by schools and districts for professional development and outreach to parents, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders.
- The Practice Tests include test questions with the same features that students will experience in 2014-15, including: selected-response items, constructed-response items, technology-enhanced items, and performance tasks—extended activities that challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to real-world problems. (Note: This initial release only includes performance tasks for ELA/literacy; math performance tasks will be added over the summer.)
 - These assessment items and performance tasks are written and reviewed in collaboration with K-12 teachers and higher education faculty—and they are all aligned to the Common Core.
- The tests provide a preview of the Smarter Balanced assessments, but they do not encompass the full range of content that students may encounter on the operational assessments and should not be used to guide instructional decisions.
- In addition, students and teachers will not receive reports or scores from the Practice Tests. Although the operational assessments will be computer adaptive, the Practice Tests will follow a fixed-form model. Scoring rubrics will be made available this summer.

The release of online Practice Tests demonstrates that the work of the state-led consortium is on track and moving forward.

- Smarter Balanced recently completed a Pilot Test of the assessment system in 21 Governing States. A broader Field Test will be conducted in spring 2014. Results from these trials will inform ongoing development of the assessment system.
- Smarter Balanced has also developed technology specifications, preliminary test blueprints, and a college content-readiness policy—all in collaboration with member states and educators.
- This summer and fall, nearly 2,000 teachers and higher education faculty from Governing States will help develop a digital library of formative assessment and professional development resources.